4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL11 Luo FL11

Their huts are very similar to those of the Bantu Kavirondo, but they are a trifle lower, and are generally built solely of reeds (*mabua*). The huts are dug out inside to a depth of 18 inches or 2 feet; the hut is plastered with the earth dug out from the interior. 342

There are two fire-places in each hut, and the customs previously enumerated about stopping at the first or second cooking place are the same as among the Bantu Kavirondo. 354

Young girls sleep in a hut with the other girls of the village in the care of an old woman. The boys of the village sleep in a hut by themselves. The villages are roughly circular. The huts are not arranged in any particular order, but the huts of one man are generally side by side. The huts of the young men are usually near the gates, and they are supposed to watch the gates in case of any attempt being made to steal the cattle. 513 361 883

On entering a village the hut directly opposite the gate is generally the hut of the principal wife of the headman of the village, or the headman of that part of the village. 361

Food products.—Mtama, sweet potatoes, a little *wimbi*, Indian corn, and also pumpkins, semsem, and pulse (*pojo*). Bananas are occasionally grown, but they do not flourish, as the country is a little too dry for them. A little tobacco and Indian hemp are grown. The Indian corn is not ground but generally eaten in an unripe state. 241

Ironwork.—They do not smelt iron, neither do they forge their hoes, which are all imported from Samia. They however forge spears, knives, bill hooks, axes, etc., from Samia iron. Among the Gemi tribe only people belonging to a clan called Uvino forge iron; the smiths are called Yothet-th. A rough kind of salt is made from the ashes of reeds and grass, and salt is also imported from Kisingiri. 325 439 258

Death customs.—When a person dies the body is immediately taken out of the house. Upon the death of a woman the brothers-in-law of the deceased dig the grave in the verandah of the house of the deceased; the corpse is buried on its left side with the hand under the head; the body is doubled up. A man, on the contrary, is buried on his right side with the hand under the head. In the case of a woman her relations and friends come and wail; her husband presents each clan that attends with a goat, the mourners stay three days. 764

The hut in which a person has died is used for a month; the neighbours then meet and drink *tembe*, and the house is broken down. Upon the death of a man his brother digs his grave; if the first wife he married is still alive he is buried in her house; if she is dead the man is buried in the verandah of the hut in which he died. [768]

Men only wail for one day, after that only women wail; the women wail for the whole of the first three days; after that the women of the village wail at dawn for fifteen days. 765

Signs of mourning.—Women wear a string of banana fibre round the forehead, they also wear a tail of white strings for about a month; the tail usually

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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There are no restrictions as to the number of women a man [595]
may marry nor as to the number of his wife's sisters whom
he may take to wife. Previous to her marriage a young 836
woman may have as many lovers as she wishes, she is only 883
careful to avoid incestuous connections. The unmarried
women have their own quarters in a village and the young
men theirs, and they seldom have any further intercourse
than that of brothers and sisters; the young men, however,
from another village pay visits to the young women during
the day and make love to them, and in the evening the
women return the men's visit and have sexual relations with
them, while other young people sing songs of an obscene
character and dance outside the house. Such intercourse is
not stopped nor discountenanced by the elder people, as it is
a recognised custom. Should any children be born from such [848]
relations, no punishment ensues nor are the couple blamed.
When a father considers his son old enough to marry, he chooses 584
a woman to be his wife. He then takes a cow and a goat to
the parents of the young woman and arranges with them the
amount to be paid for the marriage-fee. If the parents
consent to the match, when an instalment of the fee has been 585
paid, the bride is conducted by her friends to the home of the
young man and lives with him as his wife for ten days: during
this time there is daily singing and dancing outside the house
where the bride and bridegroom reside, and they take part
in the dances. At the end of ten days the bridegroom's parents
give a feast to all those who have gathered, and after the feast
the friends of the bride escort her back to her parents, who in
turn give a feast to the people that accompany their daughter.
The bride remains with her parents until her husband is able to
obtain and pay the full sum asked for as the marriage-fee.
During this time, while the bride is waiting for her husband [837]
to bring the marriage-fee, there is no obligation upon her to
live a chaste life, and she is free to have as many lovers as
before. When, however, the fee has been paid and the bride
claimed, she ceases to live a loose life and becomes most chaste.
The husband builds his house, either in or near his father's 591
village, and his wife is brought thither. When a man marries

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

IV

ADOLESCENCE

857 593 In the interim period between childhood and adolescence there comes a time when a girl's ability to deal with domestic work is more advanced than her physical and mental development. It is during this period that the mother, still occupying a central position as adviser and supervisor of the girl's work, finds difficulty in the management of her daughter. Since the domestic work of her household is heavy, the mother uses all kinds of pressure to induce her daughter to do as much as she can.

856 [572] The girl's life at this time is characterized by her increased interest in boys and desire to come into contact with them. The friendships established during childhood with other young girls are weakened by the development of a new object of friendship in the opposite sex. During this time the breasts of most girls develop noticeably. The girls show great interest in this development and employ various means to stimulate it. An instance of this interest can sometimes be seen among those who stuff clothes in their bosoms to exaggerate the size.

On the whole, the period differs only in the fact that the girls definitely aspire to be grown-ups and are also more interested in friendship with boys.

Characteristics of Adolescence

813 This new period is the time when the mother leaves her daughter to bring her knowledge of domestic work to perfection by her own efforts. As compared with the school-going age, there is little or no interference from

20:Orninde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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the mother. Thus the adolescent girl enjoys the freedom of being able to do most of her domestic work independently. Unless strict discipline is exercised she spends much of her time meeting her male friends. The thought of marriage begins to assume a reality and to become an influential factor in her attitude and movements. The self-love which made its first conspicuous appearance during the preceding age now takes the form of an effort to make herself look more attractive. Holes may be made in the ears from which to suspend ear-rings, and all sorts of armlets or bands are worn round the wrists. Clothes or head-dresses of bright colours are specially chosen. Although the practice is fast dying out, girls of this age used also to be addicted to tattooing their backs. Better clothing is among the most pressing needs of adolescent girls, and their families must either make sacrifices or else persuade the girl to make do with what is available.

The attitude of the parents. The attitude of parents towards an adolescent girl is greatly concerned with her economic value and her ability to do domestic work efficiently. An added consideration is the girl's conduct, both in and outside the family circle.

Hence, a girl's ability to work well in the house gives her mother a satisfaction which finds an outlet in conversation with other women. The mother strives to put forward the merits of her daughter as well as her social conduct in the community, while the young girl becomes almost mistress of the house, her mother hardly touching the work—especially when there is more than one adolescent daughter. The shock experienced when the girl is married is a matter which some of the envious neighbours do not refrain from mentioning.

On the other hand, a daughter who is inefficient in domestic work is no credit to her mother's reputation.

20:Omnibe I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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882 There is therefore frequent friction between some
593 mothers and daughters.

The father, while maintaining an interest of his own, does not exhibit his liking for his daughter so openly. The economic value of a girl to society is gauged by the extent to which a man may be excused his debts on the ground that after his daughter's marriage he will be able to pay them.

Allowances given to girls are not very generous despite the fact that daughters have a higher economic value than sons. There is a feeling that not much money should be lavished on someone who will not remain in the family to help the father in his old age. The main desire is to see the girl married, and it is a source of worry if she does not associate with men. The girl is also expected to be sociable towards neighbouring women, because if she is unpopular with them they might speak against her in the presence of her suitor or his relatives.

At this time disciplinary control by the parents slackens, since in order to contact men the girl requires a certain amount of freedom. Disciplinary measures may be exercised only in the event of misconduct, such as running away with a young man without notice to parents or having relations which are morally prejudicial to the community life. The mother, however, loses her dominating influence during the school age and the task of disciplining the older girl becomes the duty of the father or her older brothers.

The Sexual Life and Attitude of Adolescents

836 The sexual life of the adolescent is conditioned by the
883 prevailing social conventions on the nature of sexual relationship between males and females. Thus, though it may appear on the surface that Luo society makes no allowance for unrestricted sexual contact, in fact a

20:Orminde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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difficult burden is imposed on the girls, who have to endure considerable inhibition to avoid social censure. On the other hand, boys enjoy much greater freedom. It would appear that this relatively stronger censure of a girl's conduct derives its strength from the anatomical evidence a woman is required to show on her day of marriage to prove her chastity. In this way it appears to be the duty of society to make sure that girls live up to the moral standards which ensure them a successful marriage. Therefore, whilst considerable intermingling is accorded to both sexes, relationships resulting in pregnancies and prostitution are discouraged. And, as has been seen, the social stigma attached to such relationships and their results comes down most heavily on the woman.

In view of the difficulties involved, the girl therefore adopts a compromise. She uses her wit as a defensive means of enabling her to enjoy the companionship of men and at the same time to help her to avoid being overcome by their reasoning. In this way, an adolescent girl who is clever at conversation is admired and considered entertaining by those men with whom she comes into contact.

When there are meetings between young girls and men there is accordingly a great deal of artful conversation. Girls consider men to be full of tricks designed to trap them. Mothers also warn their growing daughters to be careful of their conduct when with the opposite sex, explaining particularly that men are not to be played with to an extent where the matter becomes serious.

When girls go about together in a group they reproach any of their number who give in to men easily. On these occasions group morality is far stronger than among those who are more individual in their attitudes.

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

883 On the whole, girls dislike those men whose chief object
864 is sexual satisfaction. Their caution is often the result of
881 talks on the nature of sexual relationship which girls hold in their communal sleeping places, and with older women.

When newly-married women return to their maternal homes, they freely discuss among themselves—especially during sleeping hours—their experiences with their husbands. This affords an opportunity for the unmarried adolescent girl to obtain first-hand information on the nature of relationships in married life.

883 *Opportunities for contact.* The normal first meeting between girls and those with whom they may have sexual relations, takes place by conscious or deliberate arrangements made by the parties concerned, at marriage ceremonies or in public places like market centres or towns. They first make each other's acquaintance somewhere between the girl's and the man's house, particularly when the two live in close proximity. These are distinguished from any other meetings in that they are arranged between the male friends and the older adolescent girls or those on the threshold of adolescence.

The meetings which take place during marriage ceremonies are observed with great interest by girls of the nursing age, who watch the older girls' behaviour towards their men friends with keen curiosity. In many instances introductions are managed through the
584 brothers of the girls. Introductions resulting in marriage
883 may also come about through a girl first acquainting herself with sisters who introduce their brother to her. Brothers of adolescent girls would, like all members of the family, disapprove of a prolonged friendship without any sign of betrothal and would do all they could to persuade the girl to look for another friend.

881 *Sex education of adolescent girls.* Girls in the old tradi-
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20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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tional society had a more deliberate or conscious sex education than they receive in modern times. Instruction on the nature of sexual relationship was formerly given by an old woman of the village, whose hut served as a communal sleeping place for the girls. This old woman was one who must have stopped giving birth to children. She was either a grandmother or an elder wife in a polygamous homestead. The communal sleeping places are still a feature of the girls' environment, but many of the modern huts have no experienced woman in them; hence the girls have lost their former source of instruction on both the marital and the following day-to-day relationships.

The change from the traditional type of sex education has forced girls approaching marriage to seek information elsewhere. At present they usually make enquiries of experienced married women living in their neighbourhood. Beyond a few cautious warnings, mothers are rarely known to take part in the sex education of their daughters while fathers are completely detached from this field of enquiry.

Sex activities in the communal sleeping places. Talks on sex are not the only activities engaged in by adolescent girls in their sleeping places. In some areas they also receive nocturnal visits from young men who have failed to find suitable opportunities to meet them during the day. This is not a widely spread practice, however, which may be due partly to the strict morality imposed by Christian moral conventions.

Sometimes the girls themselves make arrangements to welcome these visitors by night, remaining awake in order to open the door for the men with whom they have made the appointment. Sometimes this form of visit is also carried out by young men without the girls' consent, but if they are discovered, a great outcry is

20:Orninde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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raised against such raiders. It is considered a disgrace to be discovered as an accomplice in raids on the girls' sleeping quarters.

On attaining Maturity

The attainment of maturity among girls is marked by the first onset of menstruation. In the past this was kept very secret until several periods had been experienced, and even now its first occurrence is kept secret. Formerly, early preparations were made for it by instructing the girls about the physical changes involved.

The information regarding this important physiological happening used to be given by the old woman in whose hut the girls slept. At present the information is obtained largely from experienced women with whom the girls associate. In the past there was no initiation ceremony to celebrate the event, and today the position remains the same. Although the betrothal of a girl could take place as early as ten, the social attitude was and still is that girls should not be handed over to their husbands before attaining maturity. Even when the mutual handing over took place before this age, the girl was obliged to live in the home of some older woman until the advent of menstruation. It is still believed that premature marriage results in great weakness to the girl.

The social position of a girl on reaching maturity. The social position of the newly-mature girl is vague and uncertain. Any abnormality of mind, character or body, is a source of anxiety to her family. Moreover, as most girls marry between sixteen and eighteen, there is a tendency for ill-wishers to over-state the ages of girls above that limit, because the attitude of society towards them is similar to that adopted towards overdue goods. Those who fail to marry at an early age thus become subjects of scorn. So strong is the pressure exerted by

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source of much social rejoicing to discover that a married woman had been found to be a virgin. Such a bride was given a high prestige among the other women.

In the past, if a woman gave birth to an illegitimate child, her only chance of marriage was to an old man with a number of wives. There was no possibility of occupying the position of chief wife of the family; and the heads of cattle paid were much fewer. The child was taken by the man who legally married her, but she was not allowed to give birth in her own home. Everything was done to get rid of her as soon as possible.

Examples of such pregnancies are very common at present. But although social disapproval is still keenly felt, modern conditions have become more favourable to women in this situation, and an increasing number of them are being married to bachelors. Unlike some communities, no death punishment was ever given. If the occurrence takes place between close relatives the matter is kept secret; in the past, however, the couple could be exiled.

Modern Education and Adolescent Girls

Progress in the education of adolescent girls is hampered because the Luo people do not appreciate its suitability to the environment of their women. To the majority, modern education is associated with clerical work and the many other jobs that *men* take up after a school career. The position of girls in this scheme is not clearly envisaged.

The social importance attached to marriage is having to adapt itself to a prolonged school career and the raised age for marriage which this implies. An inability to appreciate schooling for girls is also based on a high esteem for the traditional education which it tends to interrupt and weaken.